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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [HO](#)
SUBJECT: TFH01: PDAS KELLY PRESSES BUSINESS LEADERS TO URGE
MICHELETTI TO STEP DOWN BEFORE ELECTIONS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR HUGO LLORENS FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

11. (C) Summary: During a November 18 meeting, business leaders Amilcar Bulnes and Norman Garcia told Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Craig Kelly and the Ambassador that they had attended a meetings the week before at which leading Hondurans had urged de facto president Roberto Micheletti to stay on until after the November 29 presidential election. Bulnes and Garcia said that they shared the view that Micheletti should not step down until after the election, given widespread fear among Hondurans of instability in his absence. PDAS Kelly and the Ambassador told the business leaders that Micheletti's resignation before the elections would significantly enhance the likelihood that they would be widely recognized. They asked Bulnes and Garcia to pass this message to Micheletti and his inner circle, which they agreed to do. End summary.

12. (C) On November 18, PDAS Kelly and the Ambassador, accompanied by the Economic Counselor, met with Amilcar Bulnes, President of the Honduran Private Enterprise Council (COHEP), and Norman Garcia, a leading businessman and former Ambassador to the U.S. who serves as an advisor to Bulnes. PDAS Kelly said that the credibility of the November 29 presidential elections would be significantly enhanced by a gesture by the de facto leadership to restore the democratic process. Bulnes said that he and Garcia had attended a meeting at the Casa Presidencial, the residence of de facto leader Micheletti, during the week of November 9 to discuss the situation. A number of leading Hondurans had taken part, including Jose Alfredo Saavedra, who took Micheletti's place as president of Congress; Attorney General Luis Rubi, who served under President Zelaya and stayed on under Micheletti; de facto Foreign Minister Carlos Lopez Contreras; and leaders of the armed forces. Micheletti had told the group that, if he was an obstacle to the resolution of the political crisis, he would resign. While there was consensus among participants in the meeting that he should step down before the January 27 Presidential inauguration, the group had urged him to stay on until after the election, citing the widespread fear among Hondurans that chaos would erupt if President Zelaya returned to power. Bulnes said that he and Garcia shared the opinion that Micheletti should stay on until after the election. According to Bulnes, Micheletti plans to leave the country on vacation during the elections in order to enhance the credibility of the process.

13. (C) PDAS Kelly said that no leader is indispensable, and

Micheletti is no exception. Honduras's institutions are strong enough for the country to survive without him. The Ambassador said that he understood that Micheletti may have not taken over because of personal ambition but instead because it was his perception that this was in the country's best interests, even though the U.S. strongly disagreed and condemned the coup. He expressed the hope that Micheletti would, in the same spirit of decisiveness, agree to step down before the elections. PDAS Kelly said that U.S. perceptions of the credibility of the elections were only one part of the picture. Other countries, such as Brazil and Mexico, are looking for a signal of commitment to the restoration of democratic order that would allow them to recognize the elections. He and the Ambassador urged Bulnes and Garcia to send this message to Micheletti and his inner circle. Bulnes and Garcia agreed to do so.

LLORENS